



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Maryland's Social Services Agency



MEDIA RELEASE

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BALTIMORE CITY AND BALTIMORE COUNTY LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES HONORED FOR PROGRESS IN CHILD WELFARE

Baltimore City DSS earned "Local Department of the Year" Honor

BALTIMORE – Baltimore City and Baltimore County local departments of social meeting or exceeding several child welfare goals.

At an awards ceremony earlier today, Maryland Department of Human Resources Secretary Brenda Donald honored Baltimore County Department of Social Services for reducing their number of children in foster care by 13 percent, and helping 73 children find permanent families through adoption.

Baltimore City Department of Social Services won awards in three out of the five categories which earned them Local Department of the Year honors. They were recognized for increasing family reunifications by 22 percent, reducing the number placed in group homes by 32 percent and placing 79 percent of their foster children in family settings.

Secretary Donald presented a special award to its director, Molly McGrath. Baltimore City has 60 percent of the state's child welfare cases. McGrath credited her committed staff for working hard on behalf of the children they serve.

In February of 2007, Donald introduced *Place Matters* - a statewide initiative to find permanent families for foster children, update social work practices and involve families in decisions affecting children in foster care.

In less than two years local departments have shown marked improvements in meeting their adoption goals, reducing the number of children placed in group homes, increasing reunifications, reducing the number of children coming into foster care and increasing the number of children placed in family settings.

"Two and a half years ago, we launched *Place Matters* to reform child welfare in Maryland" said Donald. "We take pride in the progress we've made to improve the lives of the vulnerable children and families we serve."

Directors and other staff from the Baltimore City and Baltimore County Departments of Social Services, will receive additional recognition from Governor Martin O'Malley during a reception to be held at the State House on September 17, 2009.

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The Maryland Department of Human Resources is the state's social service provider. The agency collaborates with 24 local jurisdictions to: provide foster care, adoption and protective services to children; collect and distribute child support payments; and provide temporary cash, food stamps and medical assistance to families. It also administers programs for homeless persons, refugees, migrant workers, victims of crime and women who are displaced, battered or assaulted. Last year, DHR served 638,000 people in need. In terms of its annual budget, DHR is Maryland's fourth largest state agency.